

## MATURE DRIVERS: TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS

Over the past 25 years, mature drivers (age 70 and older), grew three times as fast as the total driver population. These drivers can remain safe drivers by making adjustments in their driving behavior.

### Findings show that mature drivers:

- ❖ Rank lower in aggressive actions--speeding, following too closely, and drunk driving; rank higher in comprehension errors--confusion in congested situations, and misunderstanding of signs.
- ❖ Tend to make necessary safety adjustments in their driving

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U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

behavior, based on their own experience.

- ❖ Strongly desire to keep their automobiles because a car assures independence, convenience, and for many, the only practical way of getting around.

### Safety problems of mature drivers

The safety problems of mature drivers are rooted in the process of aging—changes in vision, ability to concentrate, and reaction time (how quickly and wisely you can make decisions under stress, and how quickly you can turn these decisions into action to avoid a crash).

The driving errors most often committed by mature drivers are failure to yield the right-of-way, wide left turns and crashing into the other cars when backing up.

As you grow older, your body undergoes gradual physical and mental changes that can affect your driving ability. *This doesn't mean that older drivers are unsafe.* It means mature drivers should become more aware of safety. You must be honest with yourself about what you can and cannot do and adjust your driving practices accordingly.

### Have Eyes Checked

It's surprising how many people don't have their eyes checked annually or realize their vision



▲ The safe driver is an alert driver.

# ABOUT OLDER DRIVERS

## TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS

isn't what it used to be. Avoid driving at night if you can't see well or are bothered by bright lights from other cars. Drive familiar roads and avoid driving during rush hours if you can.

Don't add tint to your windshields if you do much night driving. Tinted windshields reduce glare during the day but can also reduce nighttime visibility.

### Avoid Driving During Bad Weather

Replace wiper blades when they begin to streak the windshield. This is important to maintain clear vision in rainy weather.

The windshield and headlamps should be clean. Check them frequently, especially in bad weather. Remember to clean the inside of the windshield, too!

Have your headlamps checked about once a year to make sure they are aimed properly. Properly aimed headlamps will help you see better while driving at night, and keep glare away from other drivers' eyes.

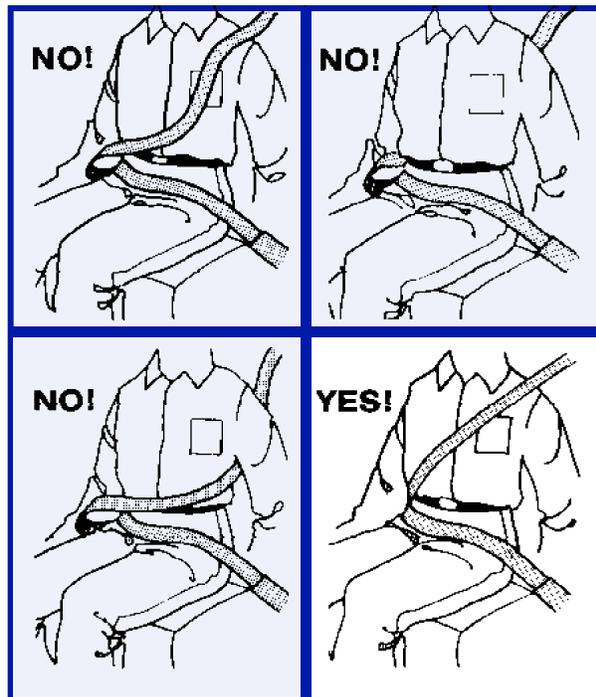
### Leaving Your Vehicle

When leaving your vehicle, always put the transmission in *Park*, set the parking brake and shut off the

engine. Make sure your foot is on the brake pedal before shifting out of *Park*.

### Adjust Head Restraints

All cars have front seat head restraints to protect against whip-lash injuries if you get hit in the rear. Some require adjustment to



▲ Buckle up for a snug fit.

work properly. Make sure they are adjusted correctly, the center of the head restraint should be even with your ears.

### Wear a Safety Belt

Every person in the car should always wear a safety belt. This is important at every age but is

especially important for older persons. Your body becomes more fragile as you age and you are more likely to be injured in a crash. (Safety belts can prevent injuries, keep you from being tossed around inside a car, or keep you from being ejected in a crash.)

### Adjust Belts for Proper Fit

Make sure your belt comes over your shoulder, across your chest, and low on your lap--never over your abdomen. Never wear the shoulder belt behind your back or under your arm. Don't wear your safety belt so loosely it slides off your shoulder. Check the amount of slack frequently and adjust it to be snug and comfortable. (The picture on this page shows the proper way to buckle up.)

### Put Young Children in Approved Child Safety Seats

Before grandchildren come to visit, make sure they will be protected in a child safety seat. If they don't bring their own, check local hospitals or health departments for child safety seat loaner programs. Otherwise, buy one for them. Children in safety seats will be protected and will be less of a distraction to you as you drive.

### Does Your Car Have Air Bags?

When riding in a vehicle equipped with air bags, do not sit

or lean unnecessarily close to the air bag, and do not place any objects over the air bag or between it and you. Air bags provide supplemental protection. You should always also wear your safety belt.

If an infant rides in your car, never use a rear-facing child safety seat in a seating position with an air bag.

Although child safety seats can be installed in any car, some auto-

matic belts are not designed for use with child safety seats. Be sure to check the owner's manual about the correct way to install and use safety seats in your car. ■

## BEFORE YOU DRIVE CHECKLIST

### **✓ Do drivers seem to stop in front of you suddenly?**

Be alert to the car in front of you. Keep adequate space between you and the car in front: 1 car length for each 10 miles per hour.

### **✓ Do cars suddenly come out of nowhere?**

Be on the lookout for other cars. Make sure mirrors are adequate. Don't wear glasses with side pieces that block your view.

### **✓ Are other drivers in too big a rush?**

Drive the speed limit. Don't drive too slowly. This is unsafe! Drive in the right lanes whenever possible.

### **✓ Do you sometimes "miss" a sign?**

Scan the road for signs and signals. Drive familiar roads.

Make sure you know signs by their shape and what the standard symbols mean.

### **✓ Are roads getting too confusing?**

Drive during non-rush hours whenever possible.

### **✓ Are gaps in traffic harder to judge?**

Don't feel pressured into making a turn or passing until you're sure you can do it safely.

### **✓ Do you take medicine?**

If you are taking any medicine, even non-prescription drugs, ask your doctor or pharmacist if it might affect your driving.

### **✓ Is it tough to make sharp turns?**

Go as slowly as necessary to stay in your lane when turning. Use your turn signal, and make sure

it's off after you complete your turn.

### **✓ Are highways getting to be more trouble?**

Stay in the lane going closest to your speed. Avoid rush hours whenever possible.

### **✓ Is night driving getting more difficult?**

Keep your headlamps clean. Learn to look away from glare. Try to drive on roads you know. If night driving gets too difficult, don't drive at night.

# IF YOU THINK YOUR MOTOR VEHICLE HAS A SAFETY PROBLEM, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

## AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE (800) 424-9393

If you think that your vehicle has a safety problem, you can assist the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by completing and mailing back the Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) included with this fact sheet, or calling the Auto Safety Hotline.

The toll-free Hotline number, (800) 424-9393, can be reached from anywhere in the United States. If you are calling from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the number is (202) 366-0123. A Spanish-speaking operator is available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern time. The Hotline is available to the hearing impaired through a teleprinter (TTY) number, (800) 424-9153. In the Washington, D.C. area the TTY number is (202) 366-7800.

If it is determined that a safety defect exists, the manufacturer



has to fix the problem at no cost to the owner.

If there are any documents relevant to your case, including copies of repair bills and letters to the manufacturer, attach them to your completed VOQ.

If you are not sure of any information requested in the VOQ, leave the box blank. But we must have the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to process your questionnaire. The VIN is a 17-digit number that can be seen through the front windshield on the driver's side of the dash-

board. When reporting a tire problem, the DOT identification (located on the sidewall) is needed.

The VOQ asks if you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of your report to the manufacturer. If so, check YES on the VOQ and sign and date it. When we send the report to the manufacturer, it often results in a satisfactory solution of individual problems. But NHTSA cannot order corrective action unless the vehicle or item of equipment is determined to have a defect and a safety recall campaign is conducted.

Check out our home page for information on a variety of vehicle safety topics.  
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>



